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POEMS

ARTHUR REED ROPES



FROM A BOOK FUND COMMEMORATING
RUTH GERALDINE ASHEN
CLASS OF 1931

It's a sad thing
when a man is to be so soon forgotten
And the shining in his soul
gone from the earth
With no thing remaining;

And it's a sad thing
when a man shall die
And forget love
which is the shiningness of life;

But it's a sadder thing
that a man shall forget love
And he not dead but walking in the field
of a May morning
And listening to the voice of the thrush.

—R.G.A., in *A Yearbook of
Stanford Writing*, 1931

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POEMS





POEMS

BY

ARTHUR REED ROPES

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**CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,
CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.**

TO MY SISTER
WHOM CHILDREN KNOW AS
M. E. R.



PREFACE.

THE present small volume has been selected from about four times its bulk of verse, written between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five; the poems and sonnets respectively are arranged roughly in their order of composition. Several of the pieces included have appeared in two small collections of verse published at Cambridge, and others in the *Cambridge Review*, and elsewhere. The only poem which seems to need any prefatory explanation is the "Barcarolle." This, as its title hints, is simply an attempt to translate Chopin's music into rhyme, almost bar by bar. The Venice of the song is the ideal home of all barcarolles, in which even the (doubtless) preposterous topography of the poem is possible. To all those who have wandered down the ways of that dream-city in some interval of prosaic life, I commend this book, asking that for the sake of their own dreams they may judge it leniently.

A. R. R.



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POEMS.

THE FLOWER OF THE FIELD.

THERE grew a poppy in a plot of corn,
And three men went thereby, before the heat
Had drawn from out the field beneath their
feet

The freshness of the dewdrops and the morn ;
So did the fairness of that lonely flower
Strike in upon the sense of all the three,
And one, a youth, spake in that youthful hour,
And said, " Methinks this poppy well might be
Some rich dark Southern beauty, sleepy-sweet,
Girt with a bending ring of gracious men."
The second, one that was of riper years,
Made answer, " Nay, a blood-red banner, torn
By steel of strife, blown with the clarion's blast,

And guarded round by ranks of shining spears."
Then spake the third, a little as in scorn
Of the field-flowers, and the long-perished past
When his tired eyes had not outlived their
tears :

"Death comes to love and war ; what aid they
then ?

This flower has one speech only unto me,
That man is as the grass, and all his pride
Of war and beauty of love shall utterly
Fade as the flowers in the sad autumn-tide ;
The wind sweeps over them and they are
gone."

And at his word the three went silent on,
And the low sunlight lay uncrossed by shade
Until a maiden came, who hummed a song
For very gladness, as she tripped along,
The freshness of the morning in her eyes ;
Nor was she moved, as they, in any wise
To any thought of that which makes afraid,
But stooped, and plucked the poppy from the
ground,
And set it on the whiteness of her dress,



THE FLOWER OF THE FIELD. 3

And so passed on with added loveliness.
No hidden inner meaning had she found,
Nor thought of strife and death to make her
- sad—

The sole sweet beauty was enough to her ;
She took God's thought, the poppy, and was
glad,
So was she Nature's best interpreter.

DREAMLAND.

DEEP in the listless land of dreams
There lies a lake shut in with hills,
Wherefrom a thousand threads of streams
Fall, and the misty moonlight gleams
Upon them, and the night air thrills
With noise of rills.

And all night long a single bird
In thickets of the tangled wood
Sings softly, and the song half-heard
Seems echo of some amorous word
Remembered from lost love, some good
Not understood.

Down the soft air of summer hours
Faint wandering wafts of perfume glide,
Sweet scents of fragrant faded flowers,
Regrets of roses, breath of bowers
From whose dead joys the years divide
Bridegroom and bride.



Beside the lake, white palace-halls,
 A marble moonshine, temple-wise
Stand high against the light that falls
And slips in silver down the walls
 And roofs whose summits snowlike rise
 Into the skies.

From out the palace fitfully
 Come murmuring through the midst of night
Echoes of song and minstrelsy,
Ripples of silver sound, that die
 Across the silver rippling light
 Far out of sight.

The boat of dreams that bears me here
 Drifts through this shadowed loveliness ;
Of all the thoughts of every year,
One thought alone, one dream seems dear,
 This sleep of Nature, passionless
 To curse or bless.

The past of passion and of pain,
 The wan wet autumn days that weep

From their grey skies in grieving rain—
No thoughts of such as these remain,
Only the pleasure, dim yet deep,
Of conscious sleep.

Sleep and soft dreams—that is the boon
That only makes us fully blest ;
Dreams underneath the midnight moon—
All sweet things else grow weary soon,
And that is truly most and best
That gives us rest.



DRONE HONEY.

I KNOW a land whereto few go to dwell,
About whose loveliness there breathes a spell
Through ranks of reeds and whispering
waves of grasses,
And many a hazy hill and dreaming dell.

And all that country like a sorceress seems,
Who murmurs mystic spells adown the streams,
And in her shadowy treasure-house amasses
The sweetness and the sleep of all men's dreams.

Therein the drones make honey—not as ours,
Nor drawn from bloom of garden beds and
bowers,
But from a land of poppy and lotos, lying
Unwakened by the freshness of spring flowers.



With all the richness of her leaves unrolled
The poppy dreams through every glossy fold,
More frequent than in fields of harvest,
sighing
To the soft wind that ripples all their gold.

Therefrom is drawn the honey of rest or pain,
Like that strange sweetness of the Colchian
plain,
Whereof who tasted were as men made
drunken,
And some that tasted overmuch were slain.

And they that overmuch delight in sleep,
The house of such shall be a ruinous heap,
Even as the Cities of the Plain, down-sunken
Beneath the horror of a leaden deep.

But he that tastes not more than man may bear
Shall have sweet dreams about him everywhere,
And in the heat and drouth of dusty summer
Shall breathe pure perfume of a cooler air.



The scandals waking troubles overworn,
The petty strifes whereby the most are torn,
 These shall he look on as a casual comer,
And pass them with a smile, but not of scorn.

And if his mind be stirred therewith—yet soon
Its strings shall tremble back to one sweet
 tune,

 Like that famed music of a mighty master,
The ripple of a brook beneath the moon.

Free is he from the pitiful present hour ;
How can it have upon him any power
 While some song's memory makes his heart
 beat faster,
Some pictured face or perfume of a flower ?

These goodly gifts he has ; but those that try
To gain them, and of over-striving die,
 What have they for the loss of love and
 laughter,
What garniture of graves wherein to lie ?



Waste mounds are theirs, nor decked with
carven stones,
Yet shall the poppy bloom above their bones,
And from it shall be drawn, in autumns
after,
Delicate honey of the hiveless drones.



A SONG IN AUTUMN.

SWEET, if summer's bliss
In the months we miss,
Yet Love's rose recovers
Fragrance with a kiss.
Suns arise and set,
Summers wane in wet,
But the lips of lovers
Never can forget.

When warm days are dead,
And the rose has shed
Over beds and bowers
Wreck of white and red,
And the summer's feet
With the swallows fleet,
After fall of flowers
Song shall yet be sweet.

Unto us that sing
Winter is as spring,
Autumn is as Maytime,
Summer takes not wing ;
For our singing saith
More is love than breath,
More than night and daytime,
More than life and death.

BALLADE OF A GARDEN.

WITH plash of the light oars swiftly plying,
The sharp prow furrows the watery way ;
The ripples reach at the bank in dying,
And soft shades shudder, and long lights play
In the still dead heat of the drowsy day,
As on I sweep with the stream that flows
By sleeping lilies that lie asway
In the garden of grace whose name none knows.

There ever a whispering wind goes sighing,
Filled with scent of the new-mown hay,
Over the flower-hedge peering and prying,
Wooing the rose as with words that pray ;
And the waves from the broad bright river bay
Slide through clear channels to dream and doze,
Or rise in a fountain's silver spray
In the garden of grace whose name none knows.



The sweet white rose with the red rose vying
 Blooms when the summer follows the May,
Till the stream be hid by the lost leaves lying,
 That autumn shakes where the lilies lay.
 But now all bowers and beds are gay,
And no rain ruffles the flower that blows,
 And still on the water soft dreams stay
In the garden of grace whose name none knows.

ENVOI.

Before the blue of the sky grows grey,
 And the frayed leaves fall from the faded
 rose,
Love's lips shall sing what the day-dreams say
 In the garden of grace whose name none
 knows.



BE CONTENT.

SHALL we seek a soul in you,
Fair, and fairest for an hour ;
Seek for fragrance in the hue
Of a scentless scarlet flower ?
Let the royal rose embower
Shadows cool with grass and dew
Love has roses for his dower,
Yet we love the poppies too.

Poppy and pomegranate—these
Are enough, we say, to bless ;
Fire and fruit and sleep and ease—
Wherefore should we seek to press
More than these from loveliness ?
Leave the labour to the bees ;
Though its flame be incenseless,
Yet the flower has power to please.

DOWN THE RIVER.

THE last of the twilight slowly
Follows the daylight dead,
Where a bank of cloud lies lowly,
And rimmed with a murky red.

From the long dark marshes and levels
The mists reek up to the sky
Like steam of the witches' revels,
Or wings of the fiends that fly.

The water is widening seaward,
The black banks vanish afar,
And the darkness deepens to leeward,
A night with never a star.

For the wet sails swell and shiver
As the wet wind sets to the sea ;
And over the rainy river,
As ghosts to the gloom, go we.



THE THREE WITNESSES.

THE sands that bury and forget,
The sea's forgetfulness of foam,
The sky that never knew us yet,
Stand round about our homeless home.
Wet weeds upon unnoted graves,
Heavens clenched in clouds of pitiless grey,
And reflux ruin of white waves,
These are the words they say.

Earth can but say the speech of years,
Slow days and years and times that tire
With trouble of man's fruitless tears
And unattainable desire ;
And each man answers back the earth
With life whose limits have but held
One only gain of little worth,
A kiss unchronicled.

ON THE BRIDGE.

ALL the storm has rolled away,
Only now a cloud or two
Drifts in ragged disarray
Over the deep darkened blue ;
And the risen golden moon
Shakes the shadows of the trees
Round the river's stillnesses
And the birdsong of the June.

Under me the current glides,
Brown and deep and dimly lit,
Soundless save against the sides
Of the arch that narrows it ;
And the only sound that grieves
Is a noise that never stops,
Footsteps of the falling drops
Down the ladders of the leaves.



NOCTURNE.

THE twilight ebbs across the fading sky,
And the tide sinks, and the long beach is dry
 Save where the bitter pools and streamlets
 steep
The barren sand, like tears of misery
That the sad sea is weeping, even as I
 For pain of love and sorrow without sleep.

I lean into the night with panting lips ;
There is no air to shake the sails of ships
 And rouse the beating pulses of the deep—
Only a sound of the thin brook that drips,
And sighing ripples on the sandy strips,
 Moved by the moving tide that knows not
 sleep.

Yet now the sea is still and pacified,
The sighing softens as the sands grow wide,
At the far end of the long backward sweep,
The utter ebb and pausing of the tide ;
For the sea-winds and all the waves have died,
And the world's trouble almost seems to
sleep.

Last night I dreamed that I lay happily
Where the deep water and the foam are free,
And all strange lovely creatures swim and
creep ;
My hair was as the sea-weed in the sea,
And the green light was tender over me,
So I was glad to feel myself asleep.

It may be thus that I shall seek for rest
When the full tide comes calling from the
west
With sound of voices not as those that weep ;
It may be this shall soothe the heaving breast,
The lips unloved and the hot hands unpressed,
For surely in the ocean there is sleep.



NOCTURNE.

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And yet, O eyes forgetful of your faith !

O love, will you remember but in death ?

Is there no echo that your heart can keep ?

The tide has turned, and with the tide its
breath

Comes landward whispering, yet what it saith

I know not. I will go and strive to sleep.

NIGHT.

O MOTHER Night, older than this creation,
Who wast in the beginning without name,
From generation unto generation
Thou art unchanging, and thy years the
same.

Day's hot short life lies dead beneath thy
kisses,
Killed with sweet sleep and lullaby of night ;
And in thine infinite echoless abysses
All light is lost, and shadow of all light.

For light is of the suns whose ceaseless
motion
Ripples the ether outwards from their place ;
Thine only is the far enfolding ocean,
The boundless, waveless sea of sunless space.

There time is not, nor measure of any hours ;
Only the darkness of that deathful sea
Feels stars come out upon its edge like flowers,
And fade like flowers through eternity.

Yet art thou loving unto us, O mother,
To give us rest from toiling of our days ;
We are thy children, born not of another,
We singers of thy perfectness and praise.

Time was when all that smote the harp to
ringing
With tuneful trouble of the trembling chords,
Had the strong sense of sunlight in their
singing,
Crowned with the laurel, conquerors and
lords.

We are weary now of watching for the morn-
ing,
The dawn that is not of the sun of song :
No bird-note of the coming day gives warning,
Though the stars wane, and we have waited
long.



Shall we watch on, till every star that twinkled
Be swept as dust from off the heavenly way,
And the grey East grow white with foam-flakes
sprinkled,
Cast from the champing of the steeds of
day?

Sweeter to look when the slow sun has faded
Into the heaving waters of the West,
And shadows darken, and the lights are shaded,
And the sea's trouble ripples into rest.

Far down the cloudlets drift in red and amber,
Fallen feathers of the golden hours that fly;
Up from the eastern gates thy footsteps
clamber,
And thy blown hair makes shadow in the sky.

The shining stars are strewn upon thy tresses,
The wind is soft with breathings of thy
lips;
Thy magic moonlight silvers and caresses
The sleeping cities and the sailing ships.



Thou art the queen of passion and of pleasure,
Mother of all loves beautiful or base ;
Kisses and smiles and tears are of thy treasure,
Sighing and sleep are given us of thy grace.

Thine are the loves that live, the loves that
wither,
Whispers, and faces seen through lattice bars,
Breathings of flute and tinkle of trembling
cither,
And sound of singing underneath the stars.

Thine also is the web none may unravel,
Woven of delicate dreams and threads of
thought,
That clothes the ways of sleep wherethrough
we travel
With veils of visions wonderfully wrought.

Therefore we turn to thee, O Night, our
mother,
With thy dark dreamful poppies garlanded
There is no man to call the dreamer brother,
Nor has he kin save thee and all thy dead.

We do not ask thee for the gift of glory,
The boon of love, or anything but rest ;
To sleep, while all the worlds grow old and
hoary,
Upon the pillow of thy pulseless breast.

Shield us alone from daylight that discovers
Too soon the secrets and the sleeps of earth:
Mother of Love and queen of many lovers,
Grant us thy rest from trouble of grief and
mirth.

So may we sleep with all that were before us,
Till strong Time tremble, being very old ;
Till singing spheres be soundless in their
chorus,
And all the circles of the suns grow cold ;

Till the faint stars fade out like dying embers,
Till the waste worlds lie emptied of their
light,
And we are as a dream that none remembers,
Save only thee, O mighty mother Night !



A MEMORY.

NOT in summer days,
When the noontide blazes
Through a filmy haze
On the poor parched daisies
And the glaring ways ;

When you tire of play,
Tire of talk and laughter,
Of the languid day
And what may be after,
All but sleep, you say ;

When the years to be
Shadow not your pleasure
In the world you see
Full of laughing leisure,
Think not then of me.



Not in dancing time,
Nor in time of singing,
Full of sound and rhyme
And the thrill of ringing
Strings and feet that chime;

But when coming day
Brings an end of dances,
Beauty fades away,
Lamps and flowers and fancies,
As the world grows grey;

When the sound of wheels
Wearies you in going,
And the landscape feels
Strange beyond all knowing
As the dawning steals;

When the last stars shine
Faint as dying embers,
May my soul divine
That your heart remembers
Any word of mine?



A MEMORY.

29

As the grey clouds glow
 Into gold above you,
Will your dreaming know
 What I feel that love you,
I that love you so?

IN PACE.

WHEN you are dead some day, my dear,
Quite dead and under ground,
Where you will never see or hear
A summer sight or sound,
What shall remain of you in death,
When all our songs to you
Are silent as the bird whose breath
Has sung the summer through?

I wonder, will you ever wake,
And with tired eyes again
Live for your old life's little sake
An age of joy or pain?
Shall some stern destiny control
That perfect form, wherein
I hardly see enough of soul
To make your life a sin?



For, we have heard, for all men born
 One harvest-day prepares
Its golden garners for the corn,
 And fire to burn the tares ;
But who shall gather into sheaves,
 Or turn aside to blame
The poppies' puckered helpless leaves,
 Blown bells of scarlet flame ?

No hate so hard, no love so bold
 To seek your bliss or woe ;
You are too sweet for hell to hold,
 And heaven would tire you so.
A little while your joy shall be,
 And when you crave for rest
The earth shall take you utterly
 Again into her breast.

And we will find a quiet place
 For your still sepulchre,
And lay the flowers upon your face
 Sweet as your kisses were,



And with hushed voices void of mirth
Spread the light turf above,
Soft as the silk you loved on earth,
As much as you could love.

Few tears, but once, our eyes shall shed,
Nor will we sigh at all,
But come and look upon your bed
When the warm sunlights fall.
Upon that grave no tree of fruit
Shall grow, nor any grain,
Only one flower of shallow root
That will not spring again.



A PETITION.

WHAT way men have not loved you in
Shall I find out to love ?
What sweeter song shall I begin
Than those you weary of ?
None in the deep still Maytime hours
May move you with sweet words ;
You walk above a world of flowers,
Amid a world of birds.

The sunlight lies upon the leaves
Unwavering all the day,
The heat across the deep blue weaves
The mist in some strange way.
At night adown the garden green
A faint breeze sighs and fails,
And fountains fill the pause between
Songs of the nightingales.

Flowers are enough for your desire,
Unstirred with love of us ;
Ah, can you not, when you but tire
Of longing languorous,
Lay your whole face within some white
Magnolia's mighty cup,
And drink in stillness of delight
Its cool sweet fragrance up ?

You have your roses' faces fair,
Your wild birds' loving note,
The sun's kiss golden on your hair,
The hair's clasp round your throat :
You have no lack beneath the moon
Of amorous song or sigh ;
How can I find you any boon
You have not more than I ?

I have no skill with song or strings
To make an hour more sweet,
No golden gifts or precious things
To lay before your feet ;



Yet more than do your birds and bees
I love your loveliness,
Because I need you more than these,
And may deserve you less.

Because I cannot give you aught
And you can give me all,
Open some door of tender thought
Within your garden wall,
That I may walk the whole year through
Along the alleys green,
Lord of the flowers, and one with you,
O lady-love and queen.

MORNING IN SPRING.

A SPRING of snow and sleet and rain
In this unlovely lifeless land,
And but the old work to do again,
The old walks and toils for foot and hand.
Summer is somewhere in the South,
Surely, and sleep and love and ease,
And murmurs of the singing mouth,
And ripple of still seas.

All sweet things lean towards the sun,
And come with summer, and depart ;
Sunshine and life and love as one,
Music and flowers and song and art.
Here in the sodden sullen dawn
The thin rain drizzles down like tears ;
The foul stream crawls through field and lawn
Where the mist never clears.



SONG.

NIGHT, that flies with wings of blue
Spread above the earth asleep,
Blesses all the lands with dew
And with starlight all the deep,
Giving rest from toil and wrong,
Quiet sleep and dreams of bliss,
To the lover like a kiss,
To the poet like a song.

Weary with the glaring day
And the windless heat of noon,
Now the folded flowers asway
Slumber to the fountain's tune.
Stars are tremulous above,
Shining only for our sake ;
Only we are left awake
Save the nightingales and Love.

BARCAROLLE.

CHOPIN, OP. 60.

(Dedicated to A. W. WISEMAN.)

THE fiery circle of the dance has burst in
flaming flakes,

Faces afire with lovers' thirst that only loving
slakes :

Dark mantles fall upon the glow of gems and
golden hair,

The embers of the burning ball drift down the
marble stair.

Fainter the footsteps sound until they cease
beyond the gates

Where the black boats are clustered round,
and the black water waits.

Love that I knew not yesterday, love that I
love to-night,

Guide on the seaward way, my star, now that
no star gives light ;



The dark lagoon lies still, the air of night is
dead and warm,
Edged with a ghostly moon the clouds drift up
before the storm :
Out of the sultry Venice ways take wing and
sail with me
Where the long wind comes wandering across
the lonely sea.

Between the frowning walls we glide, and from
an open door
Faint music falls like chiming spray struck from
the rhythmic oar.
Ah, listen now and hear the rhyme our boat-
man chants astern,
Some love-song of a gondolier, that names
each flower in turn :
"Heart of my rose that no one knows, unclosethy lord to greet !
Nay, for the bee has been with me, and he has
found me sweet.

*Give poppy-seed whereon to feed, nor heed my
grief again!*

*The poppy saith, 'Nought profiteth but death for
lovers' pain.'*"

My rose whose heart the bees have kissed, my
fiercest, darkest one,

Whose black scorched petals curl apart, burnt
by the summer sun,

Say, shall we strive with poppy-seed to send
our pain to sleep,

Or shall Death find our love alive, a flower for
him to reap?

A flower that blossomed in a night, how shall
it face the years,

Born in the tapers' light for sun, fed with a
shower of tears?

Brief barren showers, how shall they make one
bloom outlive the rest?

The black canal is full of flowers, fallen from
hair or breast.

BARCAROLLE.

41

A little stir of cooler air comes on us as we
glide,

Faint ripples lap on wall and stair, and sob
against the side.

Behind us, like a gondola, the city lies afloat,
Curtained with storm-cloud blind and dense,
as if a lover's boat.

Sweet, let us pause and drift awhile before we
seek the main ;

Lean back and clasp me not, nor lift your lips
to mine again.

The dark sea of the South is more to me than
love and bliss,

Better than any woman's mouth the ripples
sob and kiss—

A cool soft kiss of liquid lips that do not leave
a sting,

A sob not born of hearts that grieve, or joy of
anything ;

Only the murmur wherein we with all earth's
voices blend,

The trouble of the restless sea, that sorrows till
the end.

*"White lilies set where streams forget the wet
hills where they rise,
You lie and dream upon the stream, and gleam
beneath mine eyes ;
Where has she been, my love, my queen, unseen
of all but you ?
'Ask of the brook what way she took—we look
but on the blue.'"*

Where has she strayed indeed, my queen,
whom I have sought for long ?

I love you, sweet—be not afraid that I will do
you wrong ;

Ah, shall I love you best of all, I that but love
you well ?

Surely the sea's unrest bespeaks the secret it
can tell.

Hark how the ripples' fingers sound against
the gliding boat,

With touch that lingers, striking still one
melancholy note.



The dim lagoon lies wide behind, the waste of
sea ahead ;
The black clouds hide the moon, and roof a
world where all seems dead.
Long waves come heaving slowly in from far
across the night,
Each like a moving bar of shade, flecked with
a phantom light.
Against my face no wind blows cold, keen
with the ocean-smell,
Though the whole sea heaves onward, rolled in
one resistless swell ;
And the broad waves grow steeper now, and
as they meet our bark
White spray jets upward from the bow, a flash
against the dark.
As with one will the endless host moves on
across the world,
Though the wind's clarion yet is still, the
lightning's banner furled ;

No sound is there from rear to van to guide the
ranks arow,
But the sea knows the storm is near, and soon
the air shall know.

Come nearer, sweet, and clasp me round, that
no ghost glide between ;
The silence fills with sound of rustling spirit-
wings unseen :
Soft whispers, sudden sway of plumes, with
little wafts of air
Send tremors through the veins, and play
along the tingling hair.
Ah, love, you start—was it the foam that fell
on neck or face,
Or did cold fingers part the pearls and slide
beneath the lace ?
Above the lonely waste, who knows what
things may crowd and fly,
Or where Death walks, a pillar of grey cloud
from surge to sky ?



Who knows what things may plot unseen to
crush out life and form
With some blind throe of brute embrace be-
tween the sea and storm?

Turn back, and seek the home of men; another
time, maybe,
The butterflies may roam the blue above a
rippling sea;
But Psyche's wings are slight and frail, and
every dash of spray
Can drown the Eros of a night, the beauty of
a day.
Denser and denser from the East the vapours
fold and crowd,
Before the cold pale moon that strives in vain
to pierce the cloud,
Like some white maiden wandering round a
house of secret sin,
And waiting for the sound that tells of murder
done within.

The sea is cruel in the dark, beneath the pall
of sky,
With long pursuing waves that lift our bark
and pass it by.

Sing, love, to drive my dreams away; your
song shall fall on me
Soft as the musical bright spray upon the
gloomy sea;
Till black against the night astern we note the
island shore,
And all the wide lagoon lies still around our
boat once more.

*"Dear, was it ever yesterday, and were we
living then?
Some woman lived, and sweet to her were songs
of other men;
Some man there was that set his voice to love-
songs old or new—
But yet it was not I, my love; O say it was
not you!*



*Dear, will to-morrow ever dawn, and shall
we see its sun ?
Some woman's weeping face shall sorrow when
the night is done ;
Some man shall curse the golden sky that mocks
his pain above—
But it will not be I; O say, will it be you, my
love ? ”*

Ah, sweet, enough—the waves are past, and
see, the moon on high
Has found at last a sudden gap in the embattled
sky ;
White beams flood downwards from the rift on
distant spire and dome,
A rippling path of silver seems to guide us to
our home ;
And a soft breeze from out the west blows cool
against my brow,
Sweet as your breath whose sweeter song
caressed me even now.

Yet the great storm-cloud still grows high, a
boundless wall of black,

Above the trouble of the wind that strives to
sigh it back ;

Beyond the petulant weak pulse and strife of
summer's breath,

Across the life of earth there comes a darkness
as of death ;

Yet see how bright the ripples curl, how fair
the moonbeams play ;

The water splashes from the oar in pearl and
silver spray—

Look forward, turn not back, nor watch the
climbing cloud above,

Think that no storm is on our track, no death
behind our love.

A double shade of cloud and wall falls on our
way again ;

The boat-song echoes strangely loud along the
gloomy lane.

*"Here, love, we met, nor can we yet forget the
time of old,*

*The long delights of sounds and sights, white
nights and days of gold.*

*What roses bound the hedges round and crowned
our garden green !*

*Of all it gave, we only save a grave where
flowers have been."*

Surely our song is sad to-night, as though
beneath our mirth

Sounded the long, long monotone of all the
mourning earth ;

Kiss me, and bid me sing to you, before the
thunders come

To drown the thrill of voice or string, and
strike our music dumb.

*O wonderful white star above, O sea serene and
wide,*

*I lie afloat upon your love, nor seek to sound its
tide ;*

*I feel the ripples stir alone, and listen
dreamily*

*To sweet tones growing tenderer with sighings
of the sea.*

*Beyond the utter west, far out across a main
unknown,*

*Is there no island of the blest, made for our sake
alone?*

*Surely the bars of cloud but hide the sunset
land away,*

*Watched by the circling of strange stars that
wait for us alway.*

There is no star to greet my song, or show us
where we drift ;

The low dim cloud that roofs the street is
dense, without a rift,

One dark unbroken flow that moves as with
an evil will,

So slow, so smooth, we only feel that it is
coming still.

No thunder yet, though now and then a
shudder shakes the air,
No sound but of the oar that makes a ripple
on the stair ;
The water widens out again, and shows the
long lagoon,
A dim vast plain that shivers for the storm
that must be soon.
O love, look back at once, and mark how
swift and suddenly
A race of summer lightning runs along the
edge of sea !
Strange phantoms walk the cloudy wall that
veils the fire behind,
The wild dance flames, and flames again, and
shuts, and all is blind.
And through the dark the wavelets sob their
one mysterious word,
As they have ever done before there was an
ear that heard,
As they will do when all that are die as the
past has died,
And one last night without a star shuts on a
shoreless tide.

There is an end to sailing now, an end to
song and oar ;
Close to the prow the torches gleam that guide
us to the door,
And on the ripples' restless dance the flashes
leap and glow,
Flame splashes from the oar and breaks the
tide to flame below.
A little wave laps unaware along the silent
street,
And lips above the lowest stair, as if to kiss
your feet,
Then the great door heavily falls and shuts
you in with me,
While the first peal of thunder calls the storm
across the sea.

A TRANSPARENT ALLEGORY.

A SAINT in a painted window
Stands pure in her place and sweet,
For what can the strength of sin do
To climb to her holy feet ?

And men in the church pray to her,
But she never sways her form,
And the summer sun shines through her,
And finds no blood to warm.

As she stands there smiling faintly
With a glory over her head,
You think her alive and saintly ;
She is nothing but glass and lead.



She knows not if day be splendid,
Nor grieves when the shadows pass
She will stay till the world is ended,
Or somebody breaks the glass.

A BIRTHDAY ODE TO DAISY,

DECEMBER 31ST.

SHALL we say that flowers are dead,
Times of daisies over,
Now the grave-like garden bed
Has no leaf for cover ?
Though a blossom dares not peer
Through the garden mazes,
Every day in all the year
Is a day of daisies.

Over meadows wet and cold
Chilling winter passes,
Yet the silver stars and gold
Gleam among the grasses

Fearing not for winter snows,
Still your flower uncloses,
Fair as any bloom that blows
In the time of roses.

Scent of violets that grew
White or dusky-hearted,
Over meadows bright with dew
In the days departed—
These, and not a flower, I bring
From the old year taken :
Flowers shall be not till the spring
In the new year waken.

Why was not your birthday set
In the spring's flower-garden,
That my gift of violet
Need not crave your pardon ?
Many reasons could I give,
This perchance the greatest ;
Dear, the year that saw you live
Kept its best till latest.

FROM THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.

I.

THE POET AND THE MULTITUDE.

THE plain said to the mountain's barren spire,
"Nothing will grow on thy wind-beaten
brow."

And to the poet, bent above his lyre,
The throng said, "Dreamer, of what use art
thou?"

The mountain wrathfully replied, "Thou fool,
Who is it makes thy harvests grow, but I?
The fierce breath of the fiery South I cool,
And catch the clouds in mid-flight through
the sky.



"My fingers shape the avalanche's snow,
My crucible melts the hard glacier's glass,
And from my pure white breasts, in ceaseless
flow,
Long silver threads of nourishing rivers
pass."

The poet answered to the crowd again,
"Let my pale brow rest on my idle hand ;
Does not my smitten side let the life drain,
A spring to quench the thirst of every
land ?"

II.

BY THE SEA.

THE moon from her hands that dangled
Far up, has languidly
Dropped her great fan bespangled
On the blue floor of the sea.

She stoops to reach it, and lingers
With white arm stretched to save ;
But the fan escapes her fingers
On the wash of the passing wave.

To give it you, Moon, I would even
Plunge in the salt sea-flow,
If you would come down from heaven,
Or I to the heaven could go !

FROM THÉODORE DE BANVILLE.

I.

NIGHT.

We bless the coming of the Night,
Whose cool sweet kiss has set us free.
Life's clamour and anxiety
Her mantle covers out of sight.
All eating cares have taken flight,
The scented air is wine to me ;
We bless the coming of the Night,
Whose cool sweet kiss has set us free.
Rest now, O reader worn and white,
Driven by some divinity.
Aloft, like sparkling hoarfrost, see
A starry ocean throb in light,
We bless the coming of the Night.

II.

THE MOON.

THE Moon, with all her tricky ways,
Is like a careless young coquette,
Who smiles, and then her eyes are wet
And flies or follows or delays.
By night, along the sand-hills' maze,
She leads and mocks you till you fret ;
The Moon, with all her tricky ways,
Is like a careless young coquette.
And oft she veils herself in haze,
A cloak before her splendour set ;
She is a silly charming pet ;
We needs must give her love and praise—
The Moon, with all her tricky ways.



SONNETS.





SONNETS.





A HOT DAY.

THE day is drooping with the summer's spell,
Without a wind to stir the rippling sheet
Of ocean into billows, and to beat
The brink of beach with those loud lengths of
swell
That scooped the sand to wavelets where they
fell
At the last tide ; no breaths of breezes meet
The outstretched face that craves for cool ;
the heat
Beats down so blindingly, methinks 'tis well
That the blue splendours of the upper sky
Are duller for a smouldering dreamy haze :
Yet even so this stillness is to me
A state in which I neither live nor die,
But lie and hear through lengths of dazzling
days
Low laughter of the countless-dimpling
sea.

THE MAKING OF THE WORLD.

IF science tells us true, and if this earth
That swings through space, clothed with a
steam of air,
Was once a flaming mist, then, black and
bare,
A place of gloom and fire and bitter dearth ;
Then out of death sprang life, in lowest birth,
From seething of the slime, yet climbed the
stair
Of upward being, growing still more fair
Till the wide world was filled with light and
mirth—
If this be so, O man, what wilt thou say ?
“There is no God,” thou sayest ; “chance
is all.”
Did chance then plan, in that far unknown day,
The long wise growth of life, and shape
the whole ?
Nay, through all nature’s sun-pierced shadow-
wall
Our souls behold one ceaseless-working
Soul.

THE LIMITS.

IN silent pauses of the pulseless night,
In thrilling pulses of the pauseless day,
Thoughts come to me, and songs, yet flee
away
Before I chain them down with words, and
write.
I am as one that stands and sees the flight
Of many-coloured gleaming showers of spray
Cast from some wave on brink of crescent
bay,
Bubbles that in their breaking grow more
bright.
But thou, the mother of the spray, O sea,
When shall I loose myself from barren sand
And sail far out into the misty wreath
That shrouds thy dim horizon-bound from me,
Till sinks the last blue lessening line of land,
And all is sky above and sea beneath ?

AFTER THE CONCERT.

FLOWERS, that have stayed the concert out, I
bring ;

Roses whose petals have been lightly stirred
By breath of men's applause, and sweetest
word

In music of the mouths of those that sing.

They felt the single violins, that ring

Even as the clear note of a lonely bird,

And full quartett, that through all hearts
that heard

Pulsed fiercely, lightened on from string to
string.

All this the flowers have heard and yet are
fresh,

All this the flowers have treasured carefully :

So set them in your bright hair's golden mesh

Above the cameo of your perfect ear,

And ask them what the music said to me,

What will they say ? Not all I would, I
fear.

A THANKSGIVING.

FATHER and Giver of all lovely things,
For all I praise Thy name ; but most of all
For those more subtle gladnesses, that fall
Unnoticed on the crowd that sways and swings
Driven by desire of wealth with ceaseless stings ;
Half-tints, and echoes low and musical,
Shadows and sunlights on a leafy wall,
Or some intense sharp harmony of strings
That makes the soul as lightning for a time,
Or tender shade within a blossom's fold,
Or wavelets brightening on a pebbly ford,
Or perfect sweetness of a rippling rhyme,
Or green of sunset through a gap of gold—
These, more than thunder, show me Thee,
O Lord.

DAY.

(THE PICTURE BY E. BURNE-JONES.)

DAY, the strong youth, across the threshold
stands,

With hand upon the morning's open door,
And out behind him grows from more to
more

Light, and the murmur of the labouring lands.

He hath the golden flame within his hands

That lights the green sea whitening to the
shore ;

Yet nothing careth he for toil or war,

Or joy or grief, though he unloose the bands

That hold them down in slumber ; and the
earth

Wakes, and the daisies open : only he

Hath no delight or woe for darkness done.

He saith, "My life is weary at its birth,

The thing that hath been is the thing to be,

And there is no new thing beneath the sun."

NIGHT.

(THE PICTURE BY E. BURNE-JONES.)

WHITE stars come out in darkening blue of
 skies,

White foam upon the blue of darkening seas,
And the surf's murmur moans along the
 breeze,

Filled with faint echoes as of far-off cries

Repeating, "Vanity of vanities,

 All, all is vanity;" and hearing these

Night stands upon the threshold of the leas,
Blue-clad, with fair slow hands and slumbrous
 eyes.

And the wind blows to her across the deep

The voice of the dead Day, "O fairest one,
Nought good was there in me from star to
 star,

And hast thou any between sun and sun?"

So comes the cry; and from her height
 afar

Night whispers back, "There is no good but
 sleep."

MIDNIGHT.

A SPACE of blue unfathomable night,
Solemn with sense of all the stars unseen—
Veiled shades of banks, a shadow bridge
 between,
And mist-encircled blurs and points of light—
The river rolling in mysterious might,
 And dim as dreams that doubt of what they
 mean,
 And boats and men, as ghosts of what has
 been—
All this we feel, with deeper sense than sight.
Day would give back dull roofs and blackened
 towers,
 A sullen stream, grey lightless piles of stone,
 And fierce pursuit of pleasures nought
 enjoyed ;
Better the mystic moonless midnight hours,
 And the blue vision, limitless and lone,
 Of the vast city asleep and vaster void.



APOLOGY.

WE do not from the garden of a year,
Planted but late, require such cooling shade
As by some spreading cedar might be made;
Nor do we look for roses to appear,
Such as in garden of Sultan or Vizier
Made sweet the winds that with their petals
played
Round rich pavilion and through lit arcade,
In golden Eastern tales that still are dear.
Nor do we seek for fruit ; we but desire
That some sweet common flowers may meet
the spring ;
So are these all that men may have of me:
No royal lyric rose with heart of fire,
But the small earnest of some better thing,
If no blight blast it, in the years to be.

UNSATISFIED.

I THINK that man would die of weariness
Were there no seas too deep for him to
wade,
No wastes of sky to make his thought afraid,
No unclimbed peaks with pure snow passion-
less,
No still-receding aim above success,
No depths of joy and grief, of light and
shade,
But all things equable and smooth and staid,
Nor mighty overmuch to curse or bless.
We must have mysteries too great for us,
And hear strange feet on paths by men
untrod,
Whose sound is music thrilled with joyful
pain.
Ah, let life never be not marvellous,
For Love, like him of Judah sent by God,
Dies, if he go by the old ways again.

A BRIDE'S THOUGHT.

MY unknown poet-lover, whom in dreams
I lean to from unreal reality,
And feel for thee, and faintly seem to see
Thy glory of singing, as a moon that gleams
Misty on rippling reaches of strange streams,
Or star, the prophet of the sun to be—
What is it that myself has done to me ?
O thou that somewhere art, who is this seems
To be and be beloved, and is not thou ?
His lesser light is mine, who yet desire
To climb the sky to thy far height of fire ;
I would have died to know thee, but not now,
And having seen, had counted death most
sweet :
But now I pray our lives may never meet.

A SIMILE.

I NEVER saw a sight that I might call
Like to that marvel of your golden hair
That catches all men seeing in its snare,
Save once; and on this wise did it befall.
I floated down a river, past the wall
Of many a goodly garden, when the air
Was full of summer sunshine everywhere,
And nothing seemed to be in life at all
But only dreams; and drifting through a

bridge

Low-arched, and built of grey old carven
stone

Whereon the moss of many years had grown,
Behold, the sunlight struck from every ridge
Of onward-twining ripples, leapt and made
A net of golden light across the shade.

IN CHAPEL.

O ACADEMIC preacher, rest, and spare
Thy pious platitudes, nor half-intone
The words that up to the vast vaulting drone
And mingle with their echoes in the air,
Till the long murmur eddies everywhere
Down from each great rose-carven central
stone
To vex my dreaming mind, that now has
grown
To more a mood of poetry than prayer ;
For over glories of the gleaming pane
There flits a face that here no hand might
paint,
Too fair for any loveless sinless saint :
And a sound haunts me like the sweet refrain
Of some old lay of love, that ever stirs
Across the chanting of the choristers.

AFTERNOON CHAPEL.

CLOUD overhead and darkening of the skies,
Yet the glow lingers on the pictured panes ;
Reluctantly the gold and ruby wanes
From robes of saints and royal blazonries.
So let the monotones of prayer arise,
And the choir's music, louder than the
rain's,
Blend with the organ. Though the wind
complains,
Without the windows still its wailing dies.
But we must leave at length the goodly fane,
And as the closing of the carven door
Shuts in the vision of the shrine dim-lit,
We meet the passionate weeping of the rain ;
The wind's old wail is sadder than before,
And nothing in the music answers it.

IN CHAPEL.

O ACADEMIC preacher, rest, and spare
Thy pious platitudes, nor half-intone
The words that up to the vast vaulting drone
And mingle with their echoes in the air,
Till the long murmur eddies everywhere
Down from each great rose-carven central
stone
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paint,
Too fair for any loveless sinless saint :
And a sound haunts me like the sweet refrain
Of some old lay of love, that ever stirs
Across the chanting of the choristers.

BY THE SEA.

I.

WHITE sails across a summer sea
That shimmers up in lines of light
To break in ripples, where the white
Of foam-flakes wavers languidly,
And the clear under stones seem free
And dancing in the wave's delight—
O love, has all sweet sound and sight
No speech, no song, for you and me?
What shall we do to make the day
Perfect, that in all days to come
We may not find a fault in this?
Shall we search out to sing or say
Some sweetest thing, or but be dumb,
And let the sea speak, and our kiss?

IN CHAPEL.

O ACADEMIC preacher, rest, and spare
Thy pious platitudes, nor half-intone
The words that up to the vast vaulting drone
And mingle with their echoes in the air,
Till the long murmur eddies everywhere
Down from each great rose-carven central
stone
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For over glories of the gleaming pane
There flits a face that here no hand might
paint,
Too fair for any loveless sinless saint :
And a sound haunts me like the sweet refrain
Of some old lay of love, that ever stirs
Across the chanting of the choristers.

But rest entranced therein, and fanned

By breath of your sweet lips alone

Onward towards the blue unknown

Shore of some sea of fairyland ;

So that we two may once behold,

In this long loving afternoon,

That unreach'd happy haven rise,

Before the night's first breath comes cold,

And the white crescent of the moon

Grows golden as the daylight dies.

CLASSIC AND ROMANTIC.

Lo, when we pour the wine of story or song,
Art comes before us as a cupbearer,
With many carven cups and flagons fair,
Saying, "Choose now thy vessel from the
throng
To pour libation. Some for ages long
Have kept the fragrance of the wines that
were,
But two are chiefest, wonderful and rare,
And if thy wine be mighty, they are strong.
See, as I turn the cups, how one is wrought
With the fair gods of high Hellenic thought,
And shock of great glad fights, and feastings
free ;
The other, chased with leaves and shields
of knights,
Shell-shapen, hath within it shadowy
lights,
Whispers of woods and sighings of the sea."

THE CREED.

ALL through the creed's unwavering monotone
The organ sounded softly, chiming still,
Through all the changes of its wayward will,
To that one note, though not to that alone,
In weird sad chords, like the wind's word
unknown

That to the silent hearer seems to thrill
Through the long grasses of some lonely hill,
The lonelier for the sunlight broadly thrown.

So in the music came a note more strange
Caught from the world's mysterious harmony,
The eternal sorrow of elemental song,
That seems to chime in its unceasing change
With our beliefs ; but still beneath them lie
The undertones of doubt and aimless
wrong.

THE SPHINX.

THE Faith of man is as a Sphinx that lies
And gazes evermore into the West,
Facing with human eyes and lion's breast
The desert drifting through the centuries
Eastward and eastward ; when the daylight dies
It sees the sandy ripples, crest by crest,
Redden with sunset, till the earth be blest
With a cool wind beneath the cloudless skies.
The pageant of the passing stars alway
Rolls on above the silent stony face
That holds communion with the secret
night ;
And the first arrows of the eastern light
Strike on the Sphinx, and show from day to
day
The sand a little higher round its base.

COMPENSATION.

FOR our lost summer, our lost friends,

What shall be given to us again ?

Long autumn days of driving rain,

And snow wherein the sad year ends.

These shall be ours to make amends

With death of joys that still remain ;

Pain shall be recompensed with pain,

And grief a greater grief portends.

Let the rank grass grow wet and long

Over the dead that lie so still

In peace, until their lot be ours,

And we too have for joy and song

The rain and wind to beat at will

Our rotting wreaths of funeral flowers.

THE LAST PICNIC.

THE darkness drew across the wearied earth
Even as we journeyed, for the way was
long ;
The stillness of the night was on our song,
The sadness of the autumn on our mirth.
For with a foretaste of the days of dearth
The air was chill ; yet in its breath the
strong
Sea-savour seemed to raise the ghostly
throng
Of joys desired that died before their birth—
The cravings of our loves that never kissed,
The words unspoken of our loving lips.
All flowers were withered ; by our way
instead
Black poplars through a moonlit sea of mist
Peered, like the masts of many sunken ships,
Wherein our summer dreams lay drowned
and dead.

IN AN ALBUM,

DECEMBER 23RD.

Now, when the year is nigh outworn,
 There are no blooms for me to bring ;
 Bloom is of summer and of spring :
Nor bear I autumn's fruit or corn.
Snow flecks the naked fields forlorn,
 The bare boughs have not birds to sing,
 And earth holds fast in harbouring
The whole sweet world of flowers unborn.
And barren is my field of rhyme,
 Yet what I have, I give to you,
 Greeting ; a little holly spray,
 Harsh, with no tender play of hue,
 Yet not unfitting, since the day
Is close on holy Christmas-tide.

IF.

IF I were the seasons' king,
Is there aught I would not do,
O my sweet, for love of you?
Honeysuckle rioting
Over hedges in the spring,
Roses all the autumn through,
If you would, and winter too—
Gifts like these the days should bring.
But your hourly whims would tire
Me to give you your desire,
Were I lord of time, I fear ;
Now I rule not frost and fire,
I have time to love you, dear,
All the days of all the year.

THE IDEAL.

IN a land of changeless skies,
Under marble towers that keep
Watch above the purple deep—
Love, whose fairness dreaming lies
Out of sight of all men's eyes,
Do you hear the fountain weep
Drop by drop across your sleep,
Or the breeze's perfumed sighs ?
Still the lids are shut above
Eyes that are my stars of love,
And your perfect lips are dumb ;
Silent, inaccessible,
In the land I know so well,
Whither I shall never come.

TRANSLATIONS FROM BAUDELAIRE.

I.

THE LIFE BEFORE.

IN porches flashing back the sunset dyes
I dwelt long time, with al the sea around ;
At night their tall straight solemn pillars
frowned
Like the sea-caves where piers of basalt rise.
The swell that swayed the picture of the skies
Mingled in some strange harmony profound
Its mighty melodies of sovereign sound
With colours of the sunset in my eyes.
There lived I in the still delight of calm,
Circled with sky and glories and great waves,
And the brown odorous limbs of many slaves,
Who fanned my forehead with their fronds of
palm,
And whose one care was only to divine
The secret sorrow that would make me
pine.

II.

STRANGE PERFUME.

WHEN, with shut eyes, on some warm autumn
night,

I breathe the perfume of your bosom's heat,
Before me stretch the lands I long to greet,
Dazzled with beating of monotonous light ;
Some sleepy isle where Nature gives to sight
Strange trees and fruits of savour sharp and
sweet,

Men whose brown limbs are lean and strong
and fleet ;

Women whose eyes are strangely free and
bright.

Drawn by your perfume under magic skies,

I see a bay, filled by a fleet that lies

At rest from waves that wearied it so long ;
While the strong scent of the green tamarinds,
Born through my nostrils on the tropic winds,
Strikes to my soul, mixed with the mariners'
song.

III.

MEDITATION

BE still, my sorrow, and be strong to bear ;
The evening thou didst pray for, now comes
down.

A veil of dusky air enfolds the town,
Bringing soft peace to some, to others care.
Now, while the wretched throngs of soulless
clay,

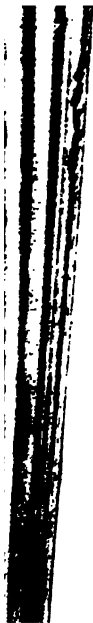
Beneath the pitiless sting of pleasure's whip
Gather remorse in slavish fellowship,
Sorrow, give me thy hand, and come away,
Far from their noise. See the sad years
deceased

Lean from the sky in garb of bygone times,
Regret that smiles up from the river's
deep,

The sun that sinks beneath the bridge to
sleep,

And hear the footsteps of the Night that
climbs

Like a long shroud, trailing across the East.



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VI.

THE DAY'S END.

UNDER wan and hueless light,
Life, that knows not rest nor shame,
Runs or writhes without an aim ;
So, when on the verge of sight
Rises the voluptuous Night,
Making even hunger stay,
Hiding even shame away,
Saith the poet, "O delight !
Rest at length for limbs and mind !
With a weary heart that holds
Nought but visions gloomiest,
Now I will lie down to rest,
Wrapped within your curtained folds,
Darkness comforting and kind !"

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